Concerning the Remiſſneſs of the Magiſtrate.

A

SERMON

Preached in the

Pariſh-Church of *Bovey-Tracy*,

LAST

Eaſter day in the Afternoon.

By *FRANCIS STOOKE*, M.A.
And VICAR thereof.

EXETER:
Printed by *Sam. Darker* and *Sam. Farley*, for *Charles Yeo*, *John Pearce*, and *Philip Biſhop*, Bookſellers in *Exon*, 1698.

100. g. 199.

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THE PREFACE

READER,

THE only occaſion of Printing this following Diſcourſe, is to vindicate My ſelf and it, from the unchriſtian Calumnies and Reflections that are every day caſt upon us: It was not my Deſign in Preaching of it, nor is it ſo in Printing of it, to exaſperate any Man, but only to contribute what I could towards the ſuppreſſion of *Vice* and *Immorality:* And in purſuance of His *Majeſty*'s Proclamation, for preventing and puniſhing *Immorality* and *Profaneneſs*, I concluded the beſt means of effecting it, was to reprove the *Re-*

miſsneſs of Magiſtrates, and to excite them to a diligent Execution of the Laws againſt notorious Offenders. And this I was moved to do from no other principle, but an hearty Zeal for the Honour of *GOD*, and the Intereſt of *Religion*; which are very much diminiſhed by the bold and unreſtrained commiſſion of Wickedneſs.

But inſtead of the Succeſs I intended and hoped for, it was condemned as a perſonal Reflection, and a very rude Treatment of the ſublime Dignity of the Magiſtrate; and a ſort of Indigitation, to be preached only before one of them. Now, I do ſincerely proteſt, I had no ſuch intentions, and ſhould have done it as ſoon before a whole Congregation of that Order; and it may be with better acceptance, and leſs hatred, than now I have met with. I have therefore ventured to ſend it abroad into the World, to let Men ſee how much I am wrong'd, and how unjuſtly I have ſuffer'd in my Reputation, upon the account of it. I am conſcious enough of its being unworthy of an Impreſſion, and

of

of my own inability for ſuch a performance, and ſhould have gladly declined the Undertaking: but the perpetual inceſſant Clamours that are riſen againſt us, together with the terrible Threats, and falſe Reports that are given out, have conſtrained me to it; beſides which I know nothing could have prevailed with me to appear in publick: And all that I have to deſire of the *Reader*, is, that he will vouchſafe it a candid Cenſure, and give ſome allowance for the Occaſion.

Farewell.

ACTS xviii. Ver. 17.

And Gallio *cared for none of these things.*

THE Words are a deſcription of the Carriage and Behaviour of a great Magiſtrate towards the moſt intolerable Impudence and Indignity that could be offered in his Preſence; no leſs than ſtriking, and laying violent Hands upon a Perſon in open Court; a Crime of ſo heinous and culpable a Nature, that it is accounted Capital in ſome Courts, and would have been puniſhed with Death. But *Gallio* did not account it ſuch, nor ſhew ſo high a Reſentment of it, and took as little notice of it, as tho' it had been an innocent, or an indifferent Action: *He cared for none of theſe things.*

Indeed it is a matter of great Conſequence in all Governments to make choice of ſuch Magiſtrates as are impartial and couragious, active and reſolute in the execution of their Office; and will ſpare neither Friend nor Foe, where-ever they obſerve the Laws to be violated, or any Inſolencies or Outrages committed. This would be a means to ſuppreſs the preſent Diſorders, and to prevent the like audacious and rude Attempts for the future. This indeed is the original deſign of Magiſtracy and Government, to reſtrain Men from doing Evil and Miſchief, and to keep them in Peace and good Order; and as often as any ſhall tranſgreſs and deviate from theſe Rules, to aſſign them a condign Puniſhment, according to the demerit of their Offences. And if this Method were duly obſerved, the World would not have that cauſe to cry out of Rapine, Extortion, Oppreſſion, Fraud and Injuſtice, that now it hath: the Rich would not grind the Faces of the Poor, nor the Poor have cauſe to complain of the Oppreſſion of the Rich; Superiors would not tyrannize over their

their Inferiors, nor Inferiors murmur and rebel againſt their Superiors. Vice would not be ſo bold and bare-faced, nor Prophaneneſs ſo common and reputable, but Peace and Holineſs would go hand in hand, and a univerſal Piety and Juſtice would overſpread the Face of the whole Earth, and Righteouſneſs would run down our Streets as a mighty Stream.

It is generally eſteemed a great Honour to be a Member of thoſe that make Laws; I am ſure it is a much greater to be one of thoſe that put them in execution: For, to what purpoſe are they made, if they are never executed? But 'tis much to be feared, there are too many which are inveſted with this Power, are of the ſame Temper and Diſpoſition with *Gallio*, *They care not for theſe things*: Altho' the greateſt Indecencies and Diſorders are perpetrated in their Preſence, and to the very Face of them. The Apoſtle tells us that the Magiſtrates Power was given them for this purpoſe, *To be a terror to thoſe that do evil, and an encouragement to thoſe that do well*, Rom. 13. 3. And he ſuppoſeth the Sword to be

born in vain, when the Magiſtrate is not the Miniſter of God in this reſpect, *A revenger, to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.*

And what a Bleſſing would it be to this Nation, if all our Magiſtrates would reſolve upon this Courſe, Act in conformity to the Apoſtle's Rule; and be magnanimous and fearleſs in the execution of their Office in ſuch a manner as he here directs. But inſtead of that, may we not juſtly complain of a Coldneſs and Indifferency, Remiſsneſs and Neglect, in taking cognizance of, or Puniſhing Offences; and altho' they are many times Eye-witneſſes and Ear-witneſſes to the fouleſt Vices and the greateſt Lewdneſs and Prophaneneſs, yet will they for all that, paſs by ſuch Actions, and ſhew as little reſentment of them, as the great Man did in the Text, who would not be offended, altho' there could not be a greater occaſion given, then for Men to revenge themſelves with their own Hands, and to offer Violence to a Perſon in the Court of Judicature, and in the ſight of the Judge. And yet we read of ſome that did ſo, for the Greeks took

Soſthenes,

Sosthenes, the chief Ruler of the Synagogue, and beat him before the Judgment-seat, *And* Gallio *cared for none of these things.*

In discoursing on which Words, I shall do these three things;

I. I shall treat of them particularly, and as they relate to *Gallio.*

II. I shall consider them in general, as they concern the whole Order of Magistrates.

III. I will shew what use and improvement may be made of them: And of these severally.

1. And first, let us observe them in their particular concern, as they relate to *Gallio*, who is said here to care for none of these things; wherein we may inform our selves, 1*st*, Who this *Gallio* was; a chief Magistrate. 2*dly*, What was the Crime objected against him; Neglect and Remissness in the execution of his Office; he cared not for it. 3*dly*, Wherein

Wherein the peccancy and culpableneſs of his Crime conſiſted; he was careleſs in theſe things, (*i. e.*) in things of the greateſt Moment and Importance.

1. As to the Perſon here ſpoken of, *Gallio*, he was a chief Magiſtrate, no leſs than Proconſul of *Achaia*; *viz.* the Lord-Deputy of that Province, under *Claudius Cæſar* the Emperor of *Rome*. This *Gallio* was a Roman by Birth, and of a noble Extraction; he was the great *Seneca*'s elder Brother, and a Man of great Eminency and Note in his time, otherwiſe he could not be fit to manage ſuch a difficult Poſt as the Government of *Achaia* was, a Country very full of Factions and Diviſions, and the People of it very ſtubborn and headſtrong; and where they could not prevail by Law, and obtain their Purpoſes by Juſtice, they would fulfil them by Force and Violence; as appears by their beating a Man in the preſence of their Governour; a very rude and unmannerly Action.

2. But

2. But yet it did not move *Gallio* in the leaſt, he paſs'd it by, and took little or no Notice of it, or at leaſt, would not ſeem to do ſo; he would not concern himſelf on either ſide, but as they quarrelled, ſo they might agree again for him; it was all one to him whether they were Friends or Foes, ſo long as they were Loyal and Obedient to *Cæſar*. But however, this is cenſured by all Interpreters as a great Fault in him, and taken as a particular Remark faſtned on him by the Spirit of God, and adjudged thereby, a careleſs Magiſtrate, and a very ill Man, *becauſe he cared not for theſe things*; but otherwiſe, of a very good Temper and Diſpoſition; for he is ſtiled by the Poet, *Dulcem Gallionem*, which imports no leſs. But whatever the Nature of the Action was, he thought it would be no Policy in him to take either part, and ſo far he was ſafe, for then he was aſſured he ſhould diſoblige neither ſide; but all this proceeded from a cowardly and puſillanimous ſpirit in him; for being newly entred upon his Government,

pro-

probably he might be afraid of the Rabble. He knew not but the Jews, had he favoured *St. Paul*'s Cause, might have accused him as no Friend of *Cæsar*'s: And 'tis most likely the Greeks, had he rescued *Sosthenes* out of their Hands, might in that boistrous Humor have served him in the same kind. Therefore he concluded it the safest way to pass it by, that so he might escape their Fury, and save himself in a whole skin.

This was the Humor of our great Magistrate here in the Text, he cared not what Violences and Outrages there were committed; nor undoubtedly, if Murther it self had ensued, would not have been much concerned, provided he could keep himself out of Harms way. But this Behaviour of his is so far from being commendable, or indeed justifiable, that it is very criminous and blamable, and deserves to be branded with the ignominious Character of Cowardize and Popularity.

3. But that which heightens his Crime, and makes it the more culpable yet, is that he was of

of the ſame temper in all things, in every Complaint that came before him, and thoſe of the greateſt moment and importance; ſuch as Controverſies about Religion, as this is generally ſuppoſed to be: If he had been remiſs and indifferent in one particular caſe only, and that too but a ſmall and inconſiderable matter, the Crime had not been ſo great; but he cared for none of theſe things, ſmall nor great: he would not concern himſelf in any of them. Now by this general neglect and remiſsneſs of his, he did but encourage and enbolden them to do the like again, and to be the more inſolent and irreſiſtible for the future; had he put the Laws in execution, and puniſhed them as ſoon as they had offended, they would have been under ſome terrour and dread of committing the like, or any other offence again; whereas the impunity of one Crime is not only taken for a toleration of that, but is alſo a temptation to another. And this was the fault with which *Gallio* was juſtly charged; he neglected the doing Juſtice upon one ſort of Offenders, and preſently he is diſturbed

with the insolencies and clamours of another; had he punished the *Jews* for their Insurrection, the *Greeks* would never have fallen upon a Person in such a violent manner, and beaten him in his presence.

You have heard what this *Gallionian* temper and disposition was, and wherein the criminalness of it lay; which was the first thing undertaken to be shewn. And I think what is here alledged against this Magistrate in particular, may with as great a truth be asserted of the generality of that Office: they are too careless and remiss in the execution of their Authority, and are worthy of as great blame as *Gallio*, or any other of that Order: they care but little for these things; if they did, Sin would not so much abound.

2*ly*. For the neglect of doing Justice upon Offenders, is one of the principal causes of that deluge of Vice and Immorality, which at this time overflows the World. And this is the general Proposition deduceable from these Words, and the second Point we are to speak to.

And

And to confirm what is here aſſerted, I need go no farther than Experience; I ſay Daily Experience is a ſufficient Proof to this Purpoſe: But I ſhall not content my ſelf with this only, but ſhall aſſign you a Scriptural one; which is that of the old *Eli*, who we are told 1 *Sam.* 4. 18. had been Judge of *Iſrael* forty Years; and behaved himſelf undoubtedly very well in the Office; for we hear no ill character fix'd upon him, but only too much gentleneſs and lenity, in the execution of his Office: but we find this was a juſt cauſe of incenſing the divine diſpleaſure againſt him, and of God's denouncing ſuch heavy Judgments againſt his Family. Nay the old Man, as ſoon as the Complaint came to his Ears of the profane and diſſolute lives of his Sons, he took particular notice of it, and immediately reprov'd them for it, ſaying unto them, *Why do ye ſuch things? for I hear of your evil doings by all this People: Nay, my Sons, it is no good report that I hear; for ye make the old People to tranſgreſs.* The good old Man ſeem'd to be heartily ſorry and

troubled for his Sons follies, but this did not anſwer God's end: And he was offended with him for this reaſon, becauſe his Sons made themſelves vile, and he reſtrained them not. God expects more than mere words, and bare reproofs; eſpecially where his Honour, and that of Religion are ſo much concerned. For when Profaneneſs, and Looſeneſs, and Irreligion crept in among them, and grew too hard for the Government, God threatens to do ſuch a thing in *Iſrael*, at which both the Ears of every one that heareth it ſhall tingle, 1 *Sam.* 3. 11.

Now the principal Reaſon why God entertained ſuch an indignation, and denounced this heavy judgment againſt the Houſe of *Eli*, was becauſe thoſe Crimes his Sons were guilty of, were of a very contagious nature, and might infect others, as well as themſelves; and by not reſtraining them, the whole land would ſoon be overrun with profaneneſs and debauchery. So that it was not *Eli*'s perſonal miſcarriages that God thought himſelf ſo diſhonored by him; but for want of taking due care for the ſuppreſſion of Lewdneſs and Immorality

lity in others. And this ſhews us the true way how every Magiſtrate may beſt ſerve God In his Station, acquire the applauſe of being an Honour to God and his Profeſſion, and beſt anſwer the end of his Function; which is by giving all due encouragement to Religion and Vertue; and by a diligent application of the moſt effectual means for ſuppreſſing Irreligion, and Profaneneſs.

This indeed is a great and noble Deſign, worthy of the greateſt Minds; and an Employment fit for Perſons of the moſt celebrated Valour and Courage; and no way proper for Men of daſtardly and effeminate Spirits: For it muſt be acknowledged to be a work of ſome difficulty, to do this effectually. It being much eaſier to ſubdue the Bodies, than the Paſſions of Men: For many are ſo wedded to their Luſts, that they account it as bad as Death to be ſeparated from them; and would rather mortify their Bodies in the Literal ſenſe, than to be depriv'd of their beloved Sin. For do we not daily ſee that Men will forgo Honour, Reputation, Intereſt, Health, and the

hopes

hopes of Heaven, rather than thoſe Vices they have been accuſtomed to the practice of? It is in vain then to imagine, that the mere fears of the Execution of Human Laws ſhould preſently reſtrain thoſe, whom no fear of Hell or Damnation, could hitherto reform? However there may, no doubt, be a means found out how this bleſſed Deſign may be perfected; how Vice may be brought into Diſgrace, and Vertue become genteel and faſhionable: And there cannot be better expedient, than good Examples; eſpecially of thoſe who are Men of Fortune and Grandeur: Let ſuch as theſe ſet the Example, and there is no fear but they will ſoon be followed. For Vertue is as attractive as Vice, when it is recommended by the practice of Men of Riches and Authority: for whatever a Great Man practices, be it good or evil, it is mighty influential, and ſeldom fails of ſucceſs: For, for the moſt part, (I know not how) it ſtrikes Mens Eyes, and charms their Hearts and Affections into a Love firſt, and then into an Imitation of it.

But

But how powerful and efficacious ſoever great mens Examples may be to this purpoſe, yet this of it ſelf will not do with all; for meer Examples, altho' of excellent uſe to men of ingenious minds, yet to others, they are not ſo, but are likened to Mercury-poſts which ſtand in the Road and point to the right, but men will go which way they pleaſe notwithſtanding.

But if Examples will not do, ſurely Laws will; and it cannot be denied but that we have excellent Laws againſt Vice and Debauchery, and there is as great an Encouragement for the Execution of them as was ever known in any Reign. But yet there is a juſt Complaint of a mighty Deluge of all ſorts of Wickedneſs ſtill among us; Are not Drunkenneſs, and Uncleanneſs, Unrighteouſneſs, and Oppreſſion, Prophanation of the Lord's day, and Contempt of Religion, as common Vices now as ever? And don't we hear as horrid Oaths and tremendous Curſes, and as great a Plenty of them, as we heard before that excellent Act was made for the ſuppreſſing of theſe Vices? Nay, How few

few of those whose Concern it is to see it done, are so hearty and zealous in punishing of them as they are required to be? And what should be the reason that there is no abatement of it all this while, especially at a time when Gratitude, if not our holy Profession, should oblige us to a Reformation? Why, it is easie to resolve all into the Corruption of human Nature; men are degenerated from the Vertues of their Ancestors, and are become feral and brutish: but this is a general Answer which serves for all Times and Places, and may not be so peculiar to the present, but I shall assign one as much more probable and likely; which is, that the bad Examples of those who ought to reform others, bring Vice into fashion, and do thereby propagate and encrease the Practice of it. It is to little purpose therefore to talk of Laws, Religion, or Reformation, unless there be a Power made use of to restrain the Vices, alter the Customs, and change the Lives of Men.

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Therefore to Examples and Laws the Magiſtrate's Power muſt be added, which was originally ordained for this end; that is, to be both a Terror to thoſe that do Evil, as well as an Encouragement to thoſe that do well. And then the Apoſtle ſuppoſeth the Sword is not bore in vain, when the Magiſtrate is the Miniſter of God in this reſpect; *a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil.* But if they ſuffer this bold Commiſſion of Sin to paſs without Correction, it will ere long pull down the Vengeance of God upon the Kingdom, and cauſe him to rain Fire and Brimſtone upon it, as he did upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*, till it be conſum'd: And if it ſhould happen that this or any other terrible judgment ſhould be our fate, where can we lay the blame? Will it not lay at the door of the Magiſtrates and Officers of Juſtice; becauſe they might, but would not redreſs theſe Impieties. For it has always been an allow'd Maxim, That he who did not forbid Sin, when it was in his power, does in effect command it. And he that doth not puniſh it,

when it is in his power, encourages and upholds it.

But the great evil and miſchief of the Magiſtrate's Neglect, in doing juſtice upon notorious Offenders, will more fully appear from theſe following Conſiderations; becauſe God is thereby diſhonoured, Religion diſparaged, the Government weakened, Authority diſpis'd, and Atheiſm increas'd.

1*ſt*. Firſt, I ſay, God is thereby diſhonoured; when Vice and Immorality are countenanced, and tolerated in a Nation: or, which is all one, when they are conniv'd at, and uncorrected; Men will be apt to judge irreverently of God, and ſay, That if he do not take complacency and delight in ſuch actions, yet he is not very highly provoked and offended with them. For, if he was, he would either ſhower down an immediate Vengeance upon the actors, as he did upon *Hophni* and *Phineas*, who for their Immorality and Lewdneſs, were taken off both in one day: Or elſe, he would denounce an heavy judgment againſt thoſe, who had it in their

their power to reſtrain ſuch Indignities, and affronts to the Divine honour, and yet were ſo negligent as to over-look them; as he did to old *Eli* and his Houſe, ſo as utterly to cancel and extinguiſh it.

Should *Pagans* and *Infidels* obſerve the debaucheries of *Chriſtians*, and how they eſcape without puniſhment, they would be apt to entertain mean and unworthy notions of the *Deity* whom we worſhip; that he is an impure or careleſs Being, and unconcerned for his Honour; otherwiſe he would never ſuffer ſuch intolerable Abuſes againſt his Divine and Sacred Perſon. *Holineſs* and *Purity* are moſt eſſential to *GOD*; herein does his Image chiefly conſiſt, and whoever acts in conformity to theſe Vertues, bears the neareſt reſemblance to his *Heavenly Father*, and may (in ſome ſenſe) be ſaid to dignify and illuſtrate the *Deity* whom he adores. And it is ſo accounted even by *GOD* himſelf, who takes it as an Honour done unto Him; and has promis'd to compenſate ſuch ſervices with Honour, *Thoſe that honour me, I will honour with God*; (i. e.) Thoſe

who by *Holineſs* of Life and purity of Manners, do profeſs to believe in me, ſuch as theſe I would chooſe for my Votaries; for they are an Ornament to the Religion they profeſs, and a credit to the *Numen* they adore: But they that deſpiſe me, ſhall be lightly eſteem'd, (i. e.) ſuch as profeſs to know *GOD*, but in their works deny him; who own a *GOD*, and yet live as if there were none; who give themſelves up to a profane and irreligious temper of Mind, and let looſe the reins to all ſorts of wickedneſs in their Lives, ſuch as the Sons of *Eli* were, who are ſaid to be the Sons of *Belial*; that lived without yoke or reſtraint, who knew not the *Lord.* 'Tis true, *GOD* cannot be deſpis'd for his glorious Perfections; yet his Authority may be diſpis'd, when Men preſumptiouſly break his Laws, and do not regard what he hath commanded or forbidden them. And ſeeing he hath appointed an Order of Men for this purpoſe, to ſee his Commands executed, to puniſh Vice, and reward Vertue; he accounts it as a great affront done him, if they neglect it.

2*ly.*

2*ly.* And as *GOD* is highly dishonoured, by such a sinful Neglect, so is Religion no less disparaged and contemned. Some will be apt to take it for a cheat and imposture, and say, It is imposed upon Men for Secular and Politick ends, and no way conducive to the Honour of *GOD*, or the benefit of Souls. Whereas if the Magistrate did profess an awe and veneration for it, and act in conformity to his Profession; then most Men, especially such as are dependent on him, would be brought by his Authority, or won by his Example, into a love and liking of it. But when Magistrates are careless and indifferent themselves, it makes others so too; and renders Religion as a mean and contemptible thing: When those whose main Duty it is to look after it, who are constituted Guardians and Defenders of it, do slight and neglect it, and will not concern themselves in restraining Immorality and Profaneness, the great blemishes of Religion; then will Men be apt to slight and ridicule it, and account it a thing of indifferency whether they are subservient to it, or no.

3*ly.*

3*ly*. But this is not all; their Contempt does not ſtop here; they will at laſt deſpiſe Authority it ſelf: What an inſignificant thing is Power and Superiority, if it be not employed to the uſes for which it was ordained? And where it is not duly executed, it will at length be ſlighted and deſpiſed: It is a true Saying, Too much Familiarity breeds Contempt; but never more true than in reſpect of *Magiſtracy* and *Miniſtry*; a too great Freedom and Familiarity of Converſation, does very much depreciate and degrate theſe ſubblime and honourable Functions, and makes them diſeſteemed and neglected: whereas Strangeneſs and Diſtance, will create a reverential Aw and Deference in all acceſſes to them, and preſerve that Honour and Dignity, which is juſtly owing to their Character.

4*ly*. Another evil Conſequence of *Careleſsneſs* and *Remiſsneſs* in the *Magiſtracy*, is, becauſe the Government is very much weakned, and made impotent thereby. The Sins of a Nation do naturaly tend the weakneſs and diſhonour of it: Profaneneſs, Debauchery, and

and Vice, are not only the reproach of a People, but they are the readieſt means to deſtroy it: who can deny that Luxury, Debauchery, and all ſorts of Intemperance, not only ſink the Reputation of a People; but alſo ſoftens and effeminates them, and makes them careleſs, idle and regardleſs of any thing, but what conduces to Eaſe and Voluptuouſneſs. In all probability, ſuch a Nation cannot ſtand long; eſpecially if it chance to be encountred by another of more Wiſdom, Courage and Reſolution, it will ſoon be overcome by it. So that it is plain, that ſuch Sins as theſe have a natural efficacy in them of weakening the Power and Intereſt of a Kingdom. But there are other Sins, ſuch as Profaneneſs, Contempt of *GOD* and Religion, common Swearing, Hypocriſy, Lying, *&c.* are the moral cauſes of a Nation's Ruin; and when the meaſure of the People's Iniquity is filled up, it will accordingly ſucceed with them; as it did with the *Jews*, who are now a *Lo-ammi*, that is, no more a People.

5*ly.*

5*ly*. The fifth and last evil Consequence of Remissness in the Magistracy, is, that Sin is thereby increased and propagated; he that does not dread the power of a Magistrate, will make but little conscience of his Actions, but indulge himself in his Lewdness with all imaginable freedom and licentiousness, and suffer nothing to restrain him, till he has gone thro' all the classes of Impiety, and is become a great proficient in it: and having drown'd his Senses and his Reason, he is at last tempted to say with the fool in the *Psalm*, *There is no God*. And the Consequence of that, is to be corrupt and abominable, or to commit all Uncleanness with greediness, in the *Apostle*'s phrase. This is the pernicious effect of Sin, if it be not timely restrained and prevented: It is of so contagious and spreading a nature, that it presently infects the whole Neighbourhood, diffuses it self from City to Country, and at last becomes Epidemical.

These are some of the mischievous Effects of *Remißneß* in the *Magistracy*; by which it evidently appears to be most true, what was asserted

asserted in the general Proposition, That the Neglect of doing Justice upon Offenders, is one of the principal causes of that deluge of Vice and Immorality, which at this time overflows the World.

Now the Application is as follows: If this then be the Cause of most of the Sin and Impiety that abounds in the World, it does certainly then very much concern all the Magistrates, and Officers of Justice among us in this Kingdom, to use all due care to prevent the growth and increase of *Atheism* and Profaneness. Let them abandon that Popular and lukewarm Temper (which has been the cause of so much mischief, both to Church and State, for the future, and be more active and diligent in their Office; especially where the Glory of *GOD*, and the Interest of Religion are struck at: they should blush to be found remiss and negligent in Executing the Laws, upon willful and notorious Offenders. To do so, is an argument they are too much in love with Sin themselves; otherwise they

would be more careful to punish it in others. I wish I could lift up my Voice, and speak loud enough to awaken every one of them, and perswade them to be diligent and vigilant in their Office; to chastise all publick Offenders, and do Justice strictly upon those who dishonour *GOD*, and are a scandal to Religion. Stir up your selves, and be zealous for your *GOD*, as the Scripture speaks. Let not the Drunkards, the Blasphemers, the profaners of the Lord's-day, who despise his Worship and Service, go unpunished. Be just and impartial in all your Corrections; spare neither Relative, nor Dependent; let your Indignation be extended against Sin in general, and as often as you find it perpetrated, be sure to punish it. Discountenance Make-bates, and sowers of Discord among Brethren: reprove the Profane and Common-swearer, and lay the Penalty as often as you find him to offend. In a word, let the severity of the Law be executed against all open Wickedness.

And

And this indeed would be the moſt effectual way, to produce a Reformation throughout the whole Kingdom. This would be the readieſt way to make us an happy People. For tho' there might ſtill be a great many ſins committed amongſt us, in ſecrecy and under covert; yet they would not be National Sins, nor be imputed to us as a publick Guilt; but every Man ſhould bear his own Iniquity. Whereas without ſuch a Reformation as this, or an hearty and an honeſt Endeavour after it, all our Pretences to Religion, will ſerve only as ſo many marks of our Inſincerity, and of the mean Opinion we have of *GOD*; as if he would be moved with ſuch Services, wherein we preſent Him only the form and ſurface, and neglect the weightier concern of doing Juſtice, ſhewing Mercy, and walking humbly before Him. There cannot be a greater diſhonour done to His Divine Majeſty, than to be unconcerned at the great Scandal that is caſt upon Religion, by a bold and publick Profaneneſs, and to ſuffer it to eſcape without check or puniſhment.

It will be to no purpose for Ministers, to decry Vice in their Sermons, nor to divert from it in their Lives, if the Magistrate's Authority do not second their Endeavours; for let them do the one never so powerfully, and the other never so regularly, yet it will be all in vain, without the concurrence of the Magistrate's Sword, to terrify and restrain them from Vice, and over-awe and compel them to Obedience.

And this is no private conjecture, or groundless surmise; but the wisdom of the Nation has concluded this to be the most effectual means of suppressing that flood of Sin and Impiety, that at this time overspreads the Kingdom; and have rightly adjudged the cause of it to be want of Care and Diligence in the Magistrate, of putting the Laws in execution.

As you would therefore answer the great Ends of your sublime Order, omit no opportunity of doing all that is conduceable there-

thereunto: uſe your utmoſt Power to promote the Honour of *GOD*, and the Intereſt of Religion: And this cannot be better done, than by diſcountenancing all lewd and vicious Perſons, and encouraging the Vertuous and Good. And above all, be moſt careful to avoid all the kinds, nay, and the very appearance of evil in your Lives and Actions: Conſider the Dignity of your Character; the Scripture calls you Gods; and ſure to anſwer that Character your muſt not only refrain your ſelves from all Wickedneſs in general, but alſo be eminent and exemplary in all holy Converſation and Godlineſs. *Let your Light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee your good works, and glory your Father which is in Heaven.* And let us conſtantly pray, as our Church directs in that pertinent branch of her *Litany*, 'That *GOD* would be pleas'd 'to bleſs and keep the Magiſtrates, giving 'them Grace to execute Juſtice, and to main-'tain Truth.

And

And to close up all, let me exhort and beseech you, in the words of St. *Paul*, That *every one that nameth the Name of* CHRIST, *would depart from Iniquity*: As we expect the Blessing of Heaven upon us, and wish the Happiness of these Kingdoms, and that the great work of Reformation may go successfully on; let us every one in our several Conditions, Stations and Places, set our selves seriously against Vice and Wickedness, and labour to root it out. For not only our Temporal, but our Eternal Interest is depending on it: *Which* GOD *give us all Grace to do, &c.*

FINIS.